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AUTHOR Roberts, Dennis
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ABSTRACT

The Summer Orientation Registration Program at the University of Maryland, "Maryland Review," is described. Dominated by academic information and decision-making sessions, it deals with concerns of general adjustment and dissemination of information about campus services and facilities. Students selected as peer advisors undergo specific training to take on the role as academic advisors, including both academic and experiential components. The nature of the training experience based on a developmental instruction paradigm, and its philosophical and theoretical basis, are described. (KS)

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"ACADEMIC ADVISING IN ACTION - A SPECIFIC PROGRAM"

Mr. Dennis Roberts

My purpose is to describe and explain a specific program of Academic Advising, that of the initial student experience, Orientation. The specific point of intervention, if you want to look at it in relation to Tom's Model, which will be presented at the end of this session, is in the early Stage 2 or Planning Stage. This is not to say that Orientation doesn't have further possibilities beyond the initial transition period to college, and indeed at Maryland and many other schools it reaches out into the entire Freshman year and beyond. Due to the limitation of time, however, I'll confine my comments to the preparation and implementation of the more traditional function of our Summer Orientation-Registration program, "Maryland Preview."

Over a six week period of time during the Summer, approximately 5,500 freshmen, 2,000 transfers, and 2,000 parents are hosted in Orientation programs of one or two days in length. The student programs are heavily dominated by academic information and decision-making sessions in addition to dealing with concerns of general adjustment and dissemination of information about campus services and facilities.

The Maryland Orientation programs have been staffed by paid student staff for a number of years but had until 1973 only dealt with general University information, not academics. In 1973, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies Office, under the leadership of Dr. Shoenberg, moved to supplement the presently existing faculty advisors with a group of peer advisors. For that one Summer the Orientation program worked with two separate student staffs, those of the student leaders and peer advisors. As the program proceeded it became evident that we were encouraging the traditional split between academics and the rest of the University experience by having the two staffs. Due to this and other logistical problems encountered that summer, we moved to combine both roles

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into a staff of student advisors which is our present continuing model. Part of the beauty of this type of arrangement is that this student advising staff is, as has been suggested as the optimal arrangement, the culmination of a cooperative effort, both financially and philosophically, between the academic and student personnel divisions of our institution.

The Student Advising staff consists of 30 students, proportionally representative of the various academic areas of the University. In our selection we try to obtain as diverse a group as possible, representing various ethnic, cultural and experiential backgrounds. We invest what we feel is a minimal amount of effort in selection since research indicates a less than impressive track record for making truly predictive selections. The selection process serves mostly to legitimize the selection to students and more importantly it serves to distinguish the group of students as "special" and therefore contributes to high level expectations and performance. Our effort is mostly invested in training.

Our training consists of two dimensions: first, a semester-long 3 credit training course; and second, a two-week crash preparatory in-residence training course just before the program starts. The training course, offered as an upper-level independent-study credit, consists of four prime dimensions: 1) Student Development Theory; 2) Informational; 3) skills development; and 4) an academic field experience. Each of these dimensions is broken down into other subcomponents or units as we proceed. The student Development Theory component begins with a discussion of concepts of student development using Chickering's seven vectors as the basis. This is then translated into what that means to us as Student Advisors. The informational component is fairly straightforward as representatives from the various campus service offices meet with the class to discuss what they offer. The third component, skills development, consists of everything from individual and group communication

and interaction to decision making and problem solving skills. As the course draws to a close, students pilot their session outlines for the Summer by presenting them to one another in a role-play environment which is critiqued at the conclusion of each presentation. Throughout the semester, during out-of-class time, extensive use is made of video-taping exercises of advising interviews which are processed in small groups of students. Carkuff empathy training and Ivey Micro-Counseling techniques are used in these skills development sessions. Finally, a two-hour per week field experience is required of each student. This field experience is with the particular academic units for which the student advises, beginning as purely a data-gathering and observation exercise and eventually moving into the student tryong out the advising skills as assistants to, or under the supervision of, the professional academic advisors. Refer to our session handout for more specifics about the course.

The final crash training which occurs just before the Summer program continues with the same material covered during the semester with a bit of brush-up and review of certain key material. In the latter part of the two-week training, an experimental, or first run-through, group of students is hosted and then one final day of training is left for processing this run-through. As you can see, a tremendous amount of time and effort goes into this training. This is so because it would be unfair and irresponsible to ask students to perform such important functions without proper preparation and assistance. Training is the key!

Without going into detail about how Student Advisors are involved in the Orientation programs, let it suffice to say that their experience is in-depth, all-consuming and we couldn't run Orientation without them. They cover career information, explain academic expectations, clarify major and departmental requirements, facilitate student selection of courses, lead seminars on student life, explain student services, act as tour guides, and even end up playing parts in a special introductory skit which helps students laugh at some of the misgivings or

questions they may have had about the University. Not only do Student Advisors have to do this for freshmen and transfers, but also for their parents, which can be another situation all together. Evaluation of our programs has traditionally been high, but one thing that always stands out above other evaluative items is the response to the Student Advisors. Approximately 90% of all program participants evaluated the student staff performance as either good or excellent.

The scope of my presentation has served thus far only to describe the content of what we're doing, rather than to give to you the philosophical and theoretical basis for what we are doing. In part this is in error because the philosophy and theoretical base of what we're doing is even more important.

To start with, the definition of student development by which I am operating is a bit more specific than that which Bob has expressed. I support the broader definition outlined by Bob but I also believe we must focus on a more specific definition of individual student development lest we lost the potential for engineering the deliberate developmental impact which is possible. Knefelkamp has articulated a definition of cognitive development of students as a "sequence of hierarchical stages with each stage representing a qualitatively different way of thinking. Each stage represents a more differentiated and integrated structural organization subsuming that of the previous stage." It is also assumed that "development is a product of the interaction between the person and environment."

The training I have described is based on a developmental instruction paradigm which not only attempts to convey the content to the student but goes beyond to encourage the individual development of our students. It is founded in William Perry's work at Harvard on the intellectual and ethical development of college age youth. The purpose of developmental instruction is to move students from a dualistic, rigid and externally motivated interpretation of their world and experiences to a pluralistic or committed, open and internally based view of the same. Refer to our handout again, specifically the page entitled, "A Sample Developmental Course

Design," to get just a taste of how developmental instruction is different from traditional modes.

Developmental instruction is in its infancy but from preliminary investigations seems to show a great deal of potential for moving our educational system toward the more "holistic" education of students for which student personnel and counseling professions have been searching. This, indeed, is the expression of Cylde Parker's "Counselor in the Classroom" and the new role of student development specialists as consultants and educators in our institutions.

This deliberate developmental education is then translated into serving new students in their advising through a student staff who ideally are experiencing developmental growth, understand it in themselves and others, and can use newly developed skills and information to be of greatest assistance to new students who need this help so badly.

We have been surprised by what we have observed as a very swift movement toward a comprehensive advising training program for students. At times the movement has been so swift that we haven't really been able to keep up with the pace, but this is only a very clear demonstration of the need for such a program. Currently, our students are being hired throughout the University as peer advisors in academic units, residence hall assistants, commuter assistants and a variety of other roles where competent student leadership is needed.

What we see in the future is an increased effort to provide training for larger numbers of students. This can be accomplished through the development of modular training units which can be structured and tailored to special group needs and facilitated by professionals in other agencies who otherwise wouldn't be able to put in the planning time necessary to design such a program. We, as the original developers, can help as consultants to other services and provide the quality control so crucial to good student service. An even further extension beyond providing training for increased numbers of students is that we are looking into the viability of offering certain modules of the training program to faculty

advisors throughout the campus. There is much additional planning that needs to be invested here but what has happened is that the increased competency level has been recognized in students and now the logical extension of that is to see that our faculty and staff have the same opportunity to heighten their information, understanding and skill levels.

As I have already indicated, it has surprised us greatly how fast this effort has progressed but to me this demonstrates the great importance and urgency of training, in providing good service, assistance and advice.

Now we'll turn to Dr. Tom Grites, Coordinator of Student Services for the College of Education to share his design for an overall advising program.